



CABINET
Tuesday, 05 October 2021

Subject	East Suffolk Council funding for disability information, advice and support services in East Suffolk
Report by	Councillor Letitia Smith Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism
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Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	Aldeburgh & Leiston Carlford and Fynn Valley Deben Eastern Felixstowe Framlingham Kelsale and Yoxford Kesgrave Martlesham and Purdis Farm Melton Orwell and Villages Rendlesham and Orford Rushmere St Andrew Saxmundham Western Felixstowe Woodbridge

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

To seek growth funding to ensure equitable access to information, advice and support services for people with disabilities across East Suffolk.

Options:

Two well established organisations provide service for people with disabilities in the East Suffolk area – Disability Advice North East Suffolk (DANES) and Disability Advice Service – East Suffolk (DAS), covering the north (former Waveney District) and south (former Suffolk Coastal District) areas respectively. East Suffolk Council currently funds services in the north of the District through DANES, but not in the south of the District through DAS. The options considered were therefore to cease funding DANES or to provide funding for DAS in order to ensure that similar provision is supported by East Suffolk Council across the district.

Recommendation/s:

That Cabinet approves an additional £12,000 per annum to fund the Disability Advice Service to provide information, advice and support on all aspects of living with a disability to disabled people in the former Suffolk Coastal area, and a small increase in grant funding of £1,000 per year for Disability Advice North East Suffolk which provides services in the former Waveney area.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

Quarterly service review meetings will be held with the Disability Advice Service to review delivery.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

The Council's Enabling Communities Strategy emphasises the importance of enabling communities of interest as well as communities of geography. Our Equality and Diversity Policy outlines that Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and our Equality Impact Assessment guidance documents clearly identify the benefit of engaging with organisations such as DANES and DAS to inform changes to services and policies.

Environmental:

None

Equalities and Diversity:

Disability is one of ten Protected Characteristics identified by East Suffolk Council (the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act plus deprivation/socio-economic disadvantage) and one which affects a significant proportion of the East Suffolk population.

20.4% of the East Suffolk population say that their lives are limited 'a little' / 'a lot', compared to 17.6% nationally. The Council has recently revamped its Equality Impact

Assessment (EqIA) process to encourage staff to undertake EqIAs as early as possible and to engage with representatives of the protected characteristic groups, including organisations representing those with a disability such as DANES and DAS.

Financial:

This proposal, if agreed, would cost the Council an additional £13,000 per year. This additional funding would start from the current financial year (2021/22) funded from the In Year savings reserve, with future years funding being growth from the 2022/23 budget onwards.

Human Resources:

None, although ESC has a lead officer who is the Champion for this Equality strand.

ICT:

None

Legal:

A simple Service Level Agreement would be developed in conjunction with DAS if the proposal is agreed, aligned to the SLA already in place with Disability Advice North-East Suffolk.

Risk:

This proposal mitigates a current risk in that it ensures equity in terms of support, advice and information for people with Disabilities across East Suffolk.

External Consultees:

This proposal is based on a representation from the Disability Advice Service

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How does this proposal support the priorities selected?

This proposal will ensure that support can be provided to people with a wide range of disabilities across the whole of the District Council area. This will help provide greater certainty that the health, wellbeing and safety of those with Disabilities is maximised.

Funding to support two organisations covering the whole of the District will maximise the opportunity to enable/support people with Disabilities to participate in the eight Community Partnerships and enable both organisations in this area to work with us to take positive action on the issues identified by the target group.

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1	Background facts
1.1	Disability is one of nine Protected Characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010. People with disabilities have been identified as a priority group during the work that the Council's Communities Team has done over the last 15 months with Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals. There are a higher proportion of people with disabilities and life limiting long term conditions than in both Suffolk and England – 20.4% in East Suffolk compared to 17.6% nationally.
1.2	The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of those with disabilities to a significant extent and increased some of the inequalities within East Suffolk, as well as increasing social isolation and loneliness within this section of the population. In July 2020, disabled people reported more frequently than non-disabled people that the coronavirus pandemic was affecting their well-being because it makes their mental health worse (46% for disabled people and 18% for non-disabled people), they were feeling lonely (42% compared to 29%), they spend too much time alone (36% and 25%), they feel like a burden on others (25% and 8%) or have no one to talk to about their worries (17% for disabled people and 10% for non-disabled people). <i>Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: July 2020</i>

1.2	The New Policy Institute in its report Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2016 found, "One aspect of poverty that can be understated in the official statistics is disability. When the extra costs of disability are partially accounted for, half of all people in poverty are either disabled, or in a household with a disabled person. Disability and family type are significant in explaining the children still in workless households; 46% of children in workless households have at least one disabled adult in the household."
1.3	According to Scope.com, life costs £583 more a month if you are disabled; and disabled people are more than twice as likely to be unemployed. According to the Centre for Social Justice there are 7.7m working-age disabled people in the UK, of whom 53.6% (4.1 million) are in work. This compares to an employment rate of 81.9% for working-age non-disabled people – meaning there is an employment gap of 28.2%. For certain health types, the numbers are even more concerning. Those with learning disabilities have an employment rate of just 5.9% despite the fact that 65% of them want to work.
1.4	Currently East Suffolk Council provides funding of £9,500 per annum (£9,000 core funding plus £500 for servicing the Disability Forum) to Disability Advice North East Suffolk and has done for a number of years, pre-dating the formation of East Suffolk Council. It is proposed to increase this to £10,000 a year plus the £500 for servicing the Disability Forum, given their increasing costs and the fact that the grant amount has remained static for a number of years. The Council also owns the building that DANES operate from and DANES do not pay rent on these premises – the value of this contribution is approximately £2,000.

2 Current position

2.1	Disability Advice North East Suffolk (DANES) are funded by East Suffolk Council to provide services to clients in the former Waveney District Council area but there is currently no equivalent funded support/service for residents in the south of the District i.e. the former Suffolk Coastal District Council area. Disability Advice Service provide significant support to our residents, but this is unfunded by East Suffolk Council (although several Councillors have funded DAS through their Enabling Communities Budgets in the past). Information about DAS governance can be found at: http://www.daseastsuffolk.org/about/about-trustees/
2.2	At least 85% of Disability Advice Service clients live in East Suffolk (in the former Suffolk Coastal District Council area). The remainder of their clients are from Ipswich. The DAS annual budget is £185,000 and they run a continuous programme of applying to charitable foundations in addition to local government bodies to try to maximise their income.
2.3	DAS expenditure is divided 70% on salary and related costs and 30% on premises and related costs. They employ 3.8FTE in part-time staff and rely on 8-10 volunteers to run the service (which is a different model to DANES).
2.4	The table below shows some key statistics for DAS from 2019 and 2020:

	2020	2019
Clients advised	1,086	1,248
Enquiries received	5,632	5,379
Appeals representations	75	77
Success rate on appeals	100%	92%
Benefit gain (Year One)	£2,111,829	£2,481,838
Benefit gain (Full)*	£7,175,091	£6,250,500
Crisis clients	127	29
Listening Service contacts	897	0
Referrals from Listening Service contacts	206 (23%)	0
Subsistence grants and food parcels to individuals	£14,772	£4,086

* Some benefits have longevity beyond the first year and the full benefit calculation accounts for this.

The increase in crisis clients during the Covid-19 pandemic is notable – from 29 in 2019 to 127 in 2020. The Listening Service is a new service set up following the DWP suspension of assessment activity, which left a lot of clients worried about their situation as well as the implications of shielding. The Listening Service involves a pro-active "call with a purpose" (i.e. not just to say hello) and by the end of 2020 DAS had contacted 900 clients, over 200 of whom needed referral to an adviser or signposting to other agencies.

2.5	<p>A simple SLA is in place with DANES, and this is reviewed and revised on an annual basis. The SLA identifies the following key areas of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free of charge, independent, confidential information and advice on all aspects of living with a disability (including outreach to key locations) • Maximise the income of people with disabilities in East Suffolk, including by supporting applications for Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Universal Credit and personal budgets • Support people with disabilities with housing applications/bids • Empowerment of disabled people to maximise choice and control over their lives • Ensure equality of opportunity for disabled people and challenging discrimination • Work with local organisations, including Access Community Trust and Job Centre Plus to promote the provision of volunteering opportunities • Engage in relevant partnerships, including the Universal Credit Support Partnership, Suffolk Benefits Forum • Provide information/data on clients supported • Provide administrative support for the Waveney Disability Forum (£500 allocation within the overall grant of £9,500)
2.6	An equivalent SLA would be co-produced with Disability Advice Service for services in the south of the District.

3 How to address current situation

3.1	In the interests of equity, it is proposed to provide £10,000 per annum grant funding to both Disability Advice North East Suffolk and Disability Advice Service in order to ensure coverage, between the two organisations, of the whole of the East Suffolk district. The Council currently provides £9,000 funding per annum to DANES (plus £500 for servicing the Disability Forum in the north of the District) and therefore this represents growth of £1,000 per annum. In addition it is proposed to contribute £2,000 towards rent and premises costs per annum for Disability Advice
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	Service as the Council provides an equivalent contribution towards the DANES premises in Lowestoft.
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4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	Currently, the Council is funding independent information, advice and support for residents with disabilities in the north of the District but not funding equivalent provision in the south of the District.
4.2	Given the impact of the pandemic on people with Disabilities and the increase in demand seen by both DANES and DAS, it is clear that this investment would enable a priority group in East Suffolk to continue to receive tailored, targeted support.

Appendices

Appendices:

None.

Background reference papers:

None.